

# *Mutual Images*

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**Japanese Pop Cultures in Europe today:  
Economic challenges, Mediated notions, Future opportunities**

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Marco PELLITTERI

Kōbe University, Kōbe (Japan)

## **Editorial**

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## Editorial

Marco PELLITTERI

*Mutual Images*, the journal, is the intellectual offspring of a small cultural and academic society officially registered in France in 2014.

Two young French scholars, Aurore Montoya and Maxime Danesin (who are now the President and Vice-President of *Mutual Images*), after a very fruitful academic year 2010-11 spent as visiting students at Kōnan University (Kōbe, Japan), decided to take a bold and stimulating intellectual initiative. They therefore embarked in the design and organisation of an interdisciplinary workshop for students and young academics, dedicated to the theme of “mutual images” between Japan and Europe in the fields of arts, social sciences, anthropology, cultural studies, visual media, and literature. As the venue of the workshop’s first edition in 2013, they chose Kōnan University itself, thanks to the kind and enthusiastic cooperation of their former professors there.

I myself was, at the time, in Japan, based at Kōbe University, and was asked to join the workshop as its chairperson. Later I would be also asked to join the cultural association that the two talented students, now successfully graduated, had established in France with the goals of making the workshop an international event and a yearly occasion, and of starting a journal in which having the workshop’s papers published.

After the workshop’s first edition, the following have been hosted at the University of Tours (France) in 2014, Kōbe University in 2015,

Aarhus University (Denmark) in 2016, and the next, just after this journal will come out of the printshop, will take place at Nagoya University (Japan) on 22-23 April 2017.

The noble and at the same time practical objective of *Mutual Images* as a workshop and a journal is to privilege contributions mainly from (1) undergraduate and graduate students, two categories of young scholars who not always can find suitable venues to publish their first academic articles; and (2) young PhD holders at the early stages of their careers. However, *Mutual Images* also welcomes contributions from more mature and accomplished scholars, there included professors, who as a matter of fact actively collaborate in a way or another in the journal – e.g. as authors, reviewers, editorial/scientific board members.

I believe that the structure of *Mutual Images* journal is, in its own way, quite innovative. While its scientific committee has been formed with the help of young as well as of established researchers (who, as said, serve as strategic consultants, article peer/blind reviewers, and intellectual guarantors) and the editorial procedures follow a well-known routine that is typical of most academic journals, *Mutual Images'* attitude towards the writings of young scholars is not haughty but on the contrary, however setting a solid standard for publication, tries to be as inclusive as possible. While the review process is serious and entrusted to valuable minds, *Mutual Images* as a journal is a continuation of the *Mutual Images* workshop: this means that the process of writing, reviewing, and rewriting the articles for publication is framed as another kind of workshop – as it should always be in academia, I believe.

As such, the journal itself is in a startup phase that look promising and full of energy.

Even before the birth of *Mutual Images* journal, the papers of the workshop's two first editions were pre-published in their "beta" version, in 2013 and 2014, in two issues of *Invene*, a Students' Club journal of the University of Tours. As soon as *Mutual Images* journal was established, all those papers were further revised and thoroughly reviewed, and republished more officially here, in the first issue.

In the current issue of the journal we present the articles coming from the 2015 edition of *Mutual Images* workshop, which I had the honour to host and organise at Kōbe University as part of my research activities during my 2-year term as a former JSPS Research Fellow (2014-16). The interested readers can have a look at the webpage of that edition of the workshop: <https://mutualimages.org/programme-29-30th-june-2013/2015-workshop>. It displays the general topics and the programme.

Like the workshop's, the focus of this issue of *Mutual Images* journal is on Japanese pop cultures in Europe today, with the related economic challenges, mediated notions, and future opportunities they entail. The programme of the workshop then, and the Table of Contents of the journal now, were designed around the set of dynamic relations between Japan and Europe through contemporary popular cultures. Over these past decades, Japanese pop cultures (manga, anime on television and in theatres, video games, toys, gadgets, cosplay, fan-fiction, light novels, dramas, and other forms of current entertainment) have been important vectors of Japanese culture on Europe.

The articles in the following pages interrogate some of the most relevant commercial, media-related, and cultural aspects in the development of Japanese popular cultures in Europe today. They particularly consider the influence of Japanese popular cultures on European societies and mentalities, within a wide range of cultural, social or economic aspects; e.g. from artistic media, such as literary productions, to eating habits.

This is in fact what you will find in the next pages, in the articles by Manuel Hernández-Pérez, Kevin Corstorphine & Darren Stephens (University of Hull), Björn Ole-Kamm (Kyōto University), Bounthavy Suvilay (independent researcher), José Andrés Santiago Iglesias (University of Vigo), Domenica Gisella Calabrò and Fabio Domenico Palumbo (University of Messina and University of Padua), and Maxime Danesin (University François-Rabelais of Tours).

In wishing you to find in the reading of this issue interesting and useful data, theory, and discussion, I encourage you to consider joining our next workshops and submitting your own articles. To do so, visit our webpage: <https://mutualimages.org>.

Marco Pellitteri  
Vice-President of *Mutual Images*